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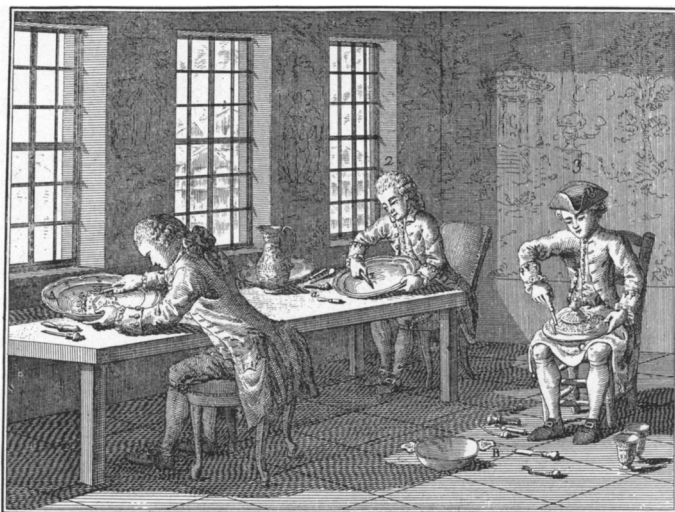
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THE MUSEUM'S EDUCATIONAL CREDO

LAST spring, at a meeting of those members of the staff of the Metropolitan Museum to whom the educational work of the Museum has been especially delegated, each person present read a brief paper containing what might be termed an educational credo for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the purpose being to clarify their own thinking and compare their own aims. The seven manuscripts, which were independently prepared, though varying considerably in wording, were remarkably unanimous in thought and fully in accord with the spirit of this article, which we have written for the benefit of the BULLETIN readers, as an expression of the basic principles that, in the opinion of this group, underly the educational work now carried on in this Museum.

We purposely limit our discussion to this Museum, inasmuch as the Metropolitan Museum through its history, location, and collections has a unique position and individual problems. Two things, at least, in its history are determining factors in the direction its development must take: first, the charter of the Museum, drawn up in 1870, which not only gives full warrant

for the emphasis placed in recent years upon the educational side of museum activity but even definitely dictates such a policy in its wording "for the purpose of . . . encouraging and developing the study of fine arts, and the application of arts to manufacture and practical life, of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and to that end, of furnishing popular instruction"; and second, the amendment to the act of incorporation passed by the State Legislature in 1908 that forever classes the Museum among the educational institutions of the country. Its location, also, in the largest city in America with thousands of people of foreign birth within easy walking distance of its galleries presents to it the opportunity of striving to be "the melting pot of the artistic ideals of many peoples" and so a great "Americanizing force in the artistic development" of the country. Other art museums face a similar situation on a smaller scale; none has so vast an undertaking. Furthermore, the generosity of the friends of this Museum has placed within its walls collections more valuable and comprehensive than those intrusted to any other museum of art in America. The Metropolitan Museum is not only in name but in fact a metropolitan museum, national in scope,

and must recognize its functions as such. Its educational ideals can be no less wide than those of the country itself, and no less inclusive of all classes of people than the ideals of democracy.

We may, then, formulate our creed as follows:

1. We believe that every human being is born with a potential love of beauty, and whether this capacity lies dormant or springs into activity depends largely upon his education, using this term to include not merely his acquirements in the school-room but all the influences at home and elsewhere that shape his character. Assuredly this latent power to find rest and happiness in those things that appeal to the eye is capable of development.

2. We believe that whether the cultivation of this faculty adds to the earning capacity of its possessor or not, it does unquestionably increase his happiness, and this in turn reacts upon his health of mind and body. Thus eyes that know how to see beauty and a mind that can appreciate its spirit are genuine assets to the individual, of greater value now than ever before, and through the individual to the community, the state, and the nation.

3. We believe that the Metropolitan Museum has an important rôle to play in the education of this innate love of beauty in all who come to its galleries or within the range of its influence.

4. We believe that it is possible through the breadth and comprehensiveness of the Museum collections to find in them some object or group of objects that may serve as a link between the present experience and interests of any visitor and the appreciation of such artistic qualities as form, color, surface, and imaginative content, and that the initial task of the museum instructor is to find this link.

5. We believe that through coöperation with the schools and correlation with the studies in the curriculum a generation

of young Americans may grow up who will continue to come to the Museum as to a friend, feeling welcome and at home, and obtaining from their visits inspiration and help for their daily life, and who will know how to see beauty everywhere because they have learned its language here.

6. We believe that while museum teaching may have two legitimate functions, information and interpretation—in other words, that in which the objects are important in relation to some other subject, and that in which they are important for themselves—the endeavor in this museum constantly is so to translate the message of the artist into terms intelligible to the visitor—be he child or adult—that in proportion to his ability he shall catch a glimpse of the artist's purpose.

7. We believe that the Museum may perform a two-fold service in the community; cultivating good taste in home decoration, dress, etc., on the one hand; and giving to salespeople, designers, and manufacturers, on the other hand, every facility for the study of the collections of decorative arts, for copying or adapting objects therein or gaining inspiration for new designs, thus helping to meet the demand that the Museum itself helped to create.

8. We believe that through its catalogues and Bulletins, through lectures given in schools and elsewhere, through groups of paintings lent to libraries, through its photographs for sale, and through its lending collections—photographs, post cards, textiles, prints, casts, and lantern slides—the Museum is extending its work of education and reaching many places where otherwise there would be little opportunity for cultivating a love of beauty.

9. We believe, finally, that in all these varied forms of educational work the Museum is performing a wartime service, the worth of which will be realized more fully when peace comes and brings with it a readjustment of values. W. E. H.